



Idaho's Citizen Commission for Reapportionment

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Burley Public Meeting
June 28, 2011
Burley High School
7:00 pm

Chairman Frasure called the meeting to order and encouraged the audience to sign in to testify. He then had the commissioners introduce themselves as follows; **Commissioner George Moses** from Boise, **Commissioner Julie Kane** from Lapwai, **Commissioner Allen Andersen** from Pocatello, **Commissioner Evan Frasure** from Bannock County, **Commissioner Lorna Finman** from northern Idaho, and **Commissioner Lou Esposito** from Boise. Also present from the staff were **Cyd Gaudet** and **Kristin Ford**.

Commissioner Kane then discussed why states are required to redistrict, explained the one person = one vote concept, and the acceptable deviation of 10%. She also explained that the commission can draw from 30 to 35 districts, and that to the maximum extent possible they should preserve traditional neighborhoods and communities of interest, they should avoid oddly shaped districts, avoid dividing counties whenever possible, and if counties are divided they should be adjacent to each other and a state road has to connect the district. She also explained that the commission must avoid dividing precincts and cannot protect incumbents, or their respective political parties.

Chairman Frasure then encouraged the audience to submit written testimony, and to go to the website to draw plans and submit them. He then called on **Commissioner Moses** to challenge the audience. **Commissioner Moses** then encouraged everyone to go on to Maptitude, the same tool that the commission uses, and to draw their own district. He then encouraged them to go further and draw 7 districts, or 20 percent of the state, to get a flavor of having to balance the districts given all of the requirements. He then asked that, if they like what they created, to please submit it. He then talked about a contest in Virginia where one college student's plan was so good it was submitted to the legislature.

Chairman Frasure then discussed that the commission is also drawing the congressional lines, that we have two districts in Idaho, and encouraged testimony on this subject as well.

First called to testify was **Senator Denton Darrington** from District 27 in Declo. **Senator Darrington** explained that he was on the last legislative reapportionment committee in 1992, and understands what the commission is up against. He went over the criteria set forth in Idaho Code 72-1506. While the criteria is not listed in order of importance, he did suggest that communities of interest be moved up to number 2. He suggested one community of interest for the commission to consider would be water, and gave the examples of Power County with the American Falls Dam and Twin Falls County with the Milner Dam. He also indicated that another community of interest would be school districts; he stated that Cassia County has a Unified School District, which also includes some from Oneida County and Twin Falls County. He indicated that Murtagh has a Joint School District that includes some from Cassia County, so both school districts cross county lines. **Senator Darrington** indicated that another community of interest is addresses, as some people in the north east corner of Cassia get their mail out of American Falls, and some in the western side of Cassia County get their mail out of Murtagh. **Commissioner Andersen** then asked **Senator Darrington** if he had any suggestions in tying the numbers together. **Senator Darrington** stated that he had been pleased to represent the people in Power and Oneida Counties and that there are some bonds of common interests between them.

He also represents the people in Bingham County, rural Aberdeen and Springfield and has represented them well. He also indicated that he likes the people in Murtaugh, and suggested that the people there go to Twin Falls and Burley for business, so it would work to put them either way. So it is possible for us to represent people from Twin Falls County, since it must be divided.

Wayne Hurst was next called to address the commission. He explained that he lives and farms in Declo and that he is the Chairman of the Cassia County Republican Central Committee. He was involved behind the scenes ten years ago, and he appreciates the toll this process takes on the lives of the commissioners and their service. He stated that the current legislators have represented them well. He feels that the area shares many common concerns, such as the gateway transmission lines, water, school interests to the east and west, and the economy is very similar. Due to this he would prefer that the district stay more or less the same as it is now. He suggested that a district that includes Cassia, Power and Oneida Counties, and part of Twin Falls County, would keep three counties whole. He stated that this area is also aligned with Minidoka County, however suggested that Minidoka would be better served if they were combined with the counties to the east and west of them. **Mr. Hurst** also stated that there has been some talk of splitting Cassia County and this is very concerning to him, and he would oppose that. **Commissioner Moses** indicated that as this part of the state has not grown as much as some other parts of the state their districts will need to get bigger. He stated that, if Bear Lake County is not a good fit with Driggs (as Sen. Darrington pointed out), and it can't go east because you hit Wyoming, and you can't go south because you hit Utah, that leaves just one direction left, which was right this way. He then asked **Mr. Hurst** if he had any thoughts about Bear Lake County being included within their district to accomplish this. **Mr. Hurst** indicated that he hadn't discussed that possibility; however he is aware that they will have to be flexible, and if they have to change he would feel comfortable joining with Minidoka County.

Next to testify was **Kent Searle** who has lived in Burley all his life and farms and dairies with his brothers. **Mr. Searle** stated that he agrees with **Senator Darrington** and **Mr. Hurst's** comments. He also indicated that in his position as a volunteer 911 coordinator he knows that Minidoka and Jerome County share emergency services. He also indicated that the Cassia County Gateway Task force is an example of how the counties in this district are tied together as communities of interest and work well together. He suggested that the district boundaries be kept basically the same. He suggested if expansion was necessary that the commission look west towards Murtaugh and Kimberly as these areas have the same type of interests, share water, and are also very rural. **Mr. Searle** told of how the three Republican legislators worked well with a Democrat Power County Commissioner. **Commissioner Andersen** then asked **Mr. Searle** to explain the Gateway Task Force. **Mr. Searle** explained that Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power had proposed a power line from Wyoming to Boise which would go through a lot of irrigated ground. He noted that Power, Oneida, Cassia, Twin Falls, and Bannock Counties all joined together on a task force and made recommendations for a corridor, for the power line, that all could agree with.

Dwight Davis, a Cassia County Assessor, concurred with the prior testimony, and stated that he would like to see District 27 remain as it is.

Next to testify was **Jared Larsen**, who is soon to graduate from BYU, and has lived in this county his whole life. He stated that he has looked at the congressional maps on the website and has come to the conclusion that there is no way to draw an adequate map that doesn't split the Treasure Valley. The Treasure Valley links the north and the east, and his suggestion is to maintain what we have now and just move the dividing line westward. This will help to unify Idaho. He has submitted his own maps and they are on the website. He also stated that he believes it is imperative to keep 35 legislative districts, as diminishing the number would diminish the representative nature of our legislature. **Mr. Larsen** indicated that he felt it would be best to keep the current Magic Valley district as it is, and encouraged the commission not to link Cassia County entirely with Twin Falls County. He did however suggest that the Hansen, Murtagh and the three Kimberly precincts from Twin Falls County could be attached to Cassia County, with the District 27 the way it is now, minus the Bingham County precinct, to make a nice district. He explained that the reason he did not suggest putting all of Cassia and Twin Falls County together is because that would require putting Oneida and Power Counties with Bannock County which would silence the largely rural interests. He also stressed that he would not recommend splitting Cassia County in any way and would not recommend combining Cassia County with the City of Twin Falls, whose urban center would dilute the rural voices of this area. **Commissioner Moses** then indicated that as the commission has gone through these hearings they have heard that there is an urban vs. rural divide in Idaho, which does not seem to happen in other states, and he asked **Mr. Larsen** to help him understand this. **Mr. Larsen** explained that Idaho is a hodgepodge with no reason for its boundaries, other than those other states were forming around it. He also explained that the mountains do create a definite north-south divide, and that rapid change and growth in Idaho causes concerns that the Idaho of today will not be the same as in the future.

Dennis Crane, the Chairman of the Cassia County Commissioners, was next to testify and indicated that most of the things he wanted to say have already been said, and stated that the way the district is now has been working very well. He stated that even though they work together well with Minidoka County, his preference would be that the commission go west and put the rural parts of Twin Falls County into their district.

Douglas Pickett, Vice-Chairman of the Cassia County Republicans, welcomed the Commission to Cassia County and explained that he lives in Oakley. He indicated that he would like to see the commission work from the outside of the state inward in drawing their lines. He also indicated that he feels the road requirement ties the commission's hands by narrowing their options. He urged the commission to consider what their decisions will look like 10 years from now. After spending some time working with Maptitude, he quickly realized that you can't just consider your own interests. You have to take a regional view, and address your neighbor's problems. He also suggested that areas that haven't grown should be joined with growth potential areas. With that in mind he noted that combining Cassia and Eastern Twin Falls may look like a much better district in ten years, or that putting Bear Lake County with a county that will grow, like Bannock County or further north could be a good match. **Mr. Pickett** indicated that in stepping back and looking freshly at the map he would suggest looking for a community of interest in Minidoka, Blaine, Butte and Camas Counties, or south of the Snake River, or in Jerome, Gooding and Lincoln Counties. He also agreed with the commonalities in Power and Oneida counties. **Mr. Pickett** also commented that the commission's number one priority is keeping within the 10 percent deviation to keep this process out of the courts. **Chairman Frasure** indicated that the commission doesn't want to get backed into the 90 day deadline, so they have set a goal for themselves of July 27th to have a plan. He explained that they are meeting three times as much as last commission to try to accomplish this. **Chairman Frasure** also explained that it is hard to find a community of interest when there is not a main road to join the district, and that this guideline was passed overwhelmingly in the legislature, and that it is hard to prove a community of interest without a connecting road. He also explained that it would take a super majority of the commission to override this guideline. He then asked **Mr. Pickett** to comment on the number of legislative districts. **Mr. Pickett** indicated that he felt it would be more difficult to maintain communities of interest with fewer districts, and that the closer our government is to us, the better off we are. He feels the statutory road requirement was a result of the District 31, and had the commission been able to do something different, than today the commission might have had more flexibility. He also indicated, to support his request that the commission start at the edges of the state and work inward, that in his opinion it is easier to put a dividing line in an urban area than take Aberdeen and put it in District 27.

Kae Cameron, the Executive Director of the Mini-Cassia Chamber of Commerce was next to testify. She indicated that all of the current legislators represent them very well and echoed the prior comments that the way in which the districts are currently set up is good. She stated that she sees some potential in expanding Cassia County in with Twin Falls County and stated that they relate well to people in the Murtagh, Kimberly, and Hansen areas. She also stated that she has a good working relationship with the Jerome and Twin Falls Chamber and she meets with them regularly. **Chairman Frasure** asked **Ms. Cameron** if Burley laps into both Minidoka and Cassia counties, to which she indicated that Burley does overlap in both counties. She had no comment on whether it would be okay to split the city of Burley. She also indicated the importance of representation in rural Idaho and indicated that if the commission reduces the number of districts they will diminish the representation of rural Idaho.

Chairman Frasure then asked if anyone else would like to testify, and indicated that the commission highly regards public input. He also asked for any comments on the number of districts, and in using a show of hands, the group was unanimous in its desire to keep 35 districts.

Chairman Frasure then moved to adjourn, all agreed, and the commission adjourned until 7 pm the next evening in Twin Falls.